

Joint Selectboard and Elementary School Board Special Meeting Minutes

Monday, July 9, 2018 at 6pm at the Calais Town Offices

Present: Denise Wheeler (Chair), John Brabant (Vice Chair), Rose Pelchuck (Member), Sharon Winn Fannon (Member), Clif Emmons (Member), Katie Lane-Karnas (Recording Secretary), Jerome Lipani, Judy Robert, Scott Bassage, Rep. Janet Ancel, Rick Kehne (Calais School Board), Chris Cadorette (Calais School Board), Susanna Culver (Calais School Board), Scott Thompson (Calais Rep on the U-32 Board), Gail Graham, Rick Purchase, David Delcore (Times Argus)

1. Call to Order: The Selectboard and School Boards called their meetings to order at 6:00 pm.
2. Public Comment: None.
3. Review, Additions/Changes to Agenda: None.
4. Update on Act 46: The School Board gave some history on the situation: the AOE and State School Board have promoted a consolidated district “preferred model” that all five towns in the U-32 sending district rejected. Each board and U-32 high school approved an alternative governance option; the AOE rejected the arguments of the boards, leaning on the dogma of consolidation—that a consolidated system is the best means of achieving the goals of Act 46. The alternative option argues that, especially in light of the legacy debt of the five towns, the transition from the present system to a merged system would shift the burden of costs from the towns with greater debt to towns with less debt. The CES Board argued that this lands them in a paradox: to achieve an equitable situation, East Montpelier’s debt would have to be in equal proportion to their share of the overall student population (it is not).
5. Scott Thompson explained three potential routes through which this inequity might be distributed, in the case of the towns being forced by the state to consolidate. Issues were brought up regarding families wanting to move and live near where the schools are located, the potential for towns with the greatest number of voters to have the highest representation on a consolidated district board, preparations for a legal battle, and a model for an independent school.
6. August 15 is the due date to the State Board of Education for a one-page response from the School Board. Rep. Ancel commented on Act 49 which identified how to create an alternative governance structure which the AOE and State Board have ignored. Rick Kehne commented on the relationship between the legislature, AOE and State Board; John Brabant considered if the legislature may regard the AOE’s actions as an unreasonable interpretation of the law. Susanna Culver commented on the high cost of taxes compared to income in Calais and in all of Vermont. Gail Graham and the Boards discussed what happens to the school facility if the

merged district does not utilize it; Board members pointed out that the deed to the school building is in the name of the Town. Scott Bassage inquired about articles of agreement with the imposed structure, and they discussed creating variant articles of agreement especially in terms of the debt structure. Sharon Winn Fannon said the fundamental issue around the schools being consolidated is really our culture and values as a small town, even more than the debt issue. The debt issue is tangible and so in theory is solvable, although it may not be solvable under current law. There was discussion about whether and how the issue of debt could ever be resolved. Rep. Ancel stated that there are S.U.s where there is a significant disparity—but not as much as there is in WCSU. If voters in each town voted in favor of a proposal to support the alternative structure, Rep. Ancel said she felt that would strengthen their potential and help to influence the AOE and State Board's decision.

7. Consideration/discussion of change of location of Trash Depot: Denise Wheeler reviewed a history of the Calais Transfer Station, where an inspection from the State resulted in a notice of violation. The Selectboard talked with the School Board about having the depot station location, run by the Perrys, moved to the CES parking lot. This would bring people to the school who may not usually be going there and allow the compost requirement to be included in the school compost existing bin. The School Board will discuss this proposal at its next meeting and may agree to this on a trial basis. Susanna was concerned about liability and will check with the school's insurance company.
8. Community Engagement: This item was tabled until a subsequent meeting.
9. Denise thanked and expressed appreciation to the School Board for all their hard work and dedication. Both Boards agreed that this was a useful meeting and that they would like to continue to keep open good lines of communication. Another joint meeting will be scheduled in the fall.
10. Adjournment: Denise Wheeler made a motion for the Selectboard to adjourn at 7:01 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried. Susanna Culver made a motion for the School Board to adjourn at 7:02 pm. The motion was seconded, voted on and carried.

Date: 7/10/2018 Respectfully Submitted, Katie Lane-Karnas, Recording Secretary
Approved by the Selectboard at the 8/27/2018 meeting

The Calais School Board approved their portion of the minutes of the 7.9.18 joint selectboard/school board meeting on 8/16/18